

Museum News

THE TOLEDO MUSEUM OF ART

FOUNDED BY EDWARD DRUMMOND LIBBEY

SUMMER 1965



AMERICAN LANDSCAPES (1860-1960)

Our American landscape is vastly varied from coast to coast, and American artists who have painted our country have matched this diverse scenery with numerous styles.

In this issue of *Museum News*, fourteen important American landscapes in the Museum collections, representing a span of nearly one hundred years are discussed. Three articles divide the paintings into three sections: paintings representing identifiable scenes, landscapes of an idyllic type, and those depicting moods of nature.

Of the fourteen paintings illustrated and described in this issue, twelve were gifts to the Museum from seven donors. As an indication of the Museum's early interest in American art, two of the paintings came into the collection in 1912 (the *Bellows* and the *Homer*) when the Museum was only eleven years old.

This is the third issue of *Museum News* devoted to American painting. Previous issues appeared in Autumn, 1959, and Autumn, 1964.

Otto Wittmann, Director

Museum News

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SUMMER 1965

New Series: Volume 8, Number 2

EDITOR: Otto Wittmann

ASSISTANT EDITOR: Millard F. Rogers, Jr.

COVER: GEORGE WESLEY BELLOWES (1882-1925).

The Bridge, Blackwell's Island. Detail.

Oil on canvas. 33½ x 44 inches.

Gift of Edward Drummond Libbey, 1912.



JASPER FRANCIS CROPSEY (1823-1900). Star-rucca Viaduct. Oil on canvas. 22 $\frac{1}{8}$ x 36 $\frac{3}{8}$ inches. Signed lower left: J. F. Cropsey/1865. Gift of Florence Scott Libbey, 1947.

PAINTING THE PARTICULAR PLACE

While the preponderant number of America's earliest paintings were portraits, there was strong interest among the first explorers for recording time and place accurately and expressively. Primarily, the first paintings of American life and landscape were objective ones, not highly personal renderings of what the artist saw. The most important artist-recorder, perhaps, in the early years of exploration and settlement was John White (active 1584-1593), the Englishman who was Governor of Raleigh's tragic colony in Virginia. His watercolors depict scenes of Indian life, flowers, and animals of this primitive land in minute detail. Other artists were interested in the topography only, but their rather crude paintings have none of the sophistication and skill evident in the work of the six artists represented in this article. In addition, during the interval of almost 400 years between the earliest artists and the men of the 19th and 20th centuries a greater expressiveness and subjective tendency has developed. These artists painted what they saw, fusing it with what they felt, experienced, or desired as beautiful and true.

Many American artists have found it advantageous to study in Europe. Most of the sculptors stayed and established permanent studios there, while the painters preferred the American scene and returned after temporary visits abroad. Expatriatism for painters was not as permanent, it would seem.

Jasper Francis Cropsey (1823-1900) worked as an architect before becoming a painter, and this early interest undoubtedly attracted him to the architectural marvel he painted in *Starrucca Viaduct* in the Museum collection. Located in the Susquehanna Valley near Lanesboro, Pennsylvania, this bridge was built by the Erie-Lackawanna Railroad in 1848. The bridge's seventeen great arches and the 1200 foot length represented a Herculean task of construction. Cropsey first painted near Lanesboro only a year or two after the bridge was completed. Drawings of the Starrucca Viaduct, undoubtedly first studies for the several versions of this painting, were made in 1853.

Cropsey's foundation as a landscape artist was in the Hudson River School, that group of Romantic painters who recognized in the early 19th century America's natural wonders. The frosty colors of autumn leaves, a panoramic vista across a spacious valley, and the bittersweet mood of the sleepy valley appealed to Cropsey. The painting was finished just two years after he returned from his second trip abroad, where he spent 1856-1863 in England. In the 20th century the painting was first known in 1947, when it appeared at auction from its English owner, Brigadier General H. Clifton-Browne. It is likely, therefore, that the painting was sent to England as a commissioned work shortly after its completion in Cropsey's Hastings-on-Hudson, New York, studio.

The Starrucca Viaduct subject was a popular one, Cropsey discovered. An ambitious scheme to give away by raffle the debt-plagued Crosby Opera House in Chicago involved a great quantity of chromolithographs of *Starrucca Viaduct* (also dated 1865) given to ticket holders who purchased a twenty dollar or fifty dollar certificate. Also included in the raffle, besides the Opera House itself, was a large version of *Starrucca Viaduct*, which probably perished in the great Chicago Fire of 1871.

There is something both comforting and awe-inspiring in *El Capitan, Yosemite Valley, California*, a painting by Albert Bierstadt (1830-1902), that captures the rugged granite cliffs and the placid meadow along the Merced River. The artist intended it this way, consciously blending factual description with the Romantic concern for the dramatic.

Bierstadt's parents were German immigrants, and he returned to their home city of Düsseldorf to study as a young artist. It was his practice to make small studies which he later developed into large-scale works in his New York studio. Bierstadt was eminently successful as an artist, finding a demand for his paintings from appreciative patrons.

His first trip West was made in 1858, joining a government expedition. He first saw the Yosemite area in 1863, and by then he was the most highly paid painter in American history. Revisiting Yosemite in 1872-1873, he made



ALBERT BIERSTADT (1830-1902). *El Capitan*, Yosemite Valley, California. Oil on canvas. 32 $\frac{1}{4}$ x 48 inches. Signed lower left: ABierstadt. Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Roy Rike, 1959.

studies on the spot, probably using them in 1875 to compose this painting that features the impressive cliff, El Capitan. Bierstadt's career collapsed as collecting tastes veered toward European standards. The splendid studio he built was burned in 1882, and this catastrophe symbolized the beginning of Bierstadt's decline. When he died, he was practically forgotten. His luminous canvases recall the awakening of interest in America's landscape in the 19th century, a period that began with the first examples by members of the Hudson River School. Geographically, Bierstadt's *El Capitan* marks the Far Western extreme of interest in America's landscape.

As a youth, William Merritt Chase (1849-1916) had an inauspicious record as an artist, but he persisted with portraiture in Indianapolis, New York, and St. Louis. Generous patrons sponsored a study period abroad, and Chase entered the Royal Academy, Munich, in 1872. After returning to New York in 1878, he established a studio renowned for its exotic trappings (a Russian wolfhound, two macaws, a cockatoo and a servant who wore a red fez!), teach-



WILLIAM MERRITT CHASE (1849-1916). *Near the Beach, Shinnecock*. Oil on canvas. 30 x 48 inches. Signed lower left: Wm. M. Chase. Gift of Arthur J. Secor, 1924.

ing students and producing about twenty-five paintings a year during his professional career.

One of Chase's favorite haunts, and the site of his summer house and school, was near Shinnecock, not far from Southampton, Long Island. This area is the setting for *Near the Beach, Shinnecock*, painted about 1895 in the sand hill region of scrubby bushes and sweet fern. Romping in Chase's impressionistically treated landscape are, presumably, two of his daughters and his wife, Alice. They frequently served as models in his pictures. Chase pictured this favorite bay, sky, and earth with brisk brushwork and a keen appreciation of lighting effects and color juxtapositions. First trained as a realist, Chase helped develop an American Impressionism together with Twachtman and other artists in *The Ten* during the last twenty years of his life.

The paintings of Arthur Clifton Goodwin (1866-1929) had many subjects, but none more explicit and beguiling than his cityscapes of Boston. An enigmatical figure, Goodwin began painting after 1902, when he worked in the Boston studio of Louis Kronberg. This city was his home for many years, al-



ARTHUR CLIFTON GOODWIN (1866-1929). *On South Boston Pier*. Oil on canvas. 15 $\frac{7}{8}$ x 20 inches. Signed lower left: A. C. Goodwin. Gift of Florence Scott Libbey, 1950.

though he worked between 1921-1929 in New York. Something of a dandy and drunkard, Goodwin was primarily self-taught. The influence of that important American group, *The Ten*, that included such artists as Hassam, Weir, Twachtman, and Metcalf, gave Goodwin a strong dose of Impressionism. *The Ten* is generally considered the first American school of Impressionism, forming the dominant movement in America as Goodwin began to paint.

Goodwin's delicate coloring and freely organized compositions have a pastel-like quality. His spontaneous, easy interpretations of Boston recorded scenes of more gracious times, reflected by the promenading ladies in the Toledo Museum Painting, *On South Boston Pier*. Probably painted between 1902-

1905, at the earliest stage of his development, the scene illustrates the old Pier built in 1885-1887 at Marine Park. Located at City Point, this park included Castle Island, an old fortress, which is seen in the extreme left portion of the painting. Often, Goodwin's grainy canvas is covered lightly or sketchily with color, revering the textural and tonal effects. As an American Impressionist, Goodwin created landscapes and figure studies in terms of light, thus enlarging the academic outlook that dominated a large segment of American artists practicing in the 20th Century.

As a youngster, George Wesley Bellows (1882-1925) was an unlikely prospect as an artist. Until his senior year at Ohio State University, he preferred basketball and baseball to painting. He disdained European travel throughout his life, and his avowed Americanism was incorporated in subject matter and choice of teachers, although he owed a debt to the influences of Hals, Velázquez, and Manet.

Bellows was born in Columbus, Ohio, and went to New York City to study with Robert Henri during his senior year in college. His paintings soon reflected the everyday subjects, often sordid, of New York characters, streets, rivers, and tenements. Portraiture interested him as well as landscapes, and he was attracted frequently to the East River, where he painted *Blackwell's Bridge* in December, 1909. This bridge, now known as the Queensboro Bridge, spans the East River at 59th Street, passing over Welfare Island, called Blackwell's Island when Bellows worked on this canvas. The turbulent river scene and arching bridge are rendered in rich impasto, a virile and gritty subject for 1909, painted by a relatively unknown artist.

When the painting was acquired by Edward Drummond Libbey, he wrote to George W. Stevens, the first Director of the Museum, a prophetic statement concerning Bellows' eventual status: "You need not hang this canvas now unless you care to. I feel that some day it will be important, for the painter shows great promise."

Three years after painting *Blackwell's Bridge*, Bellows completed a questionnaire for the *American Art Directory*, listing his seven most important works. The Toledo painting was one of the seven. Mr. Libbey's opinion is proved correct. The American artist who died as Chaplin appeared in *Gold Rush* and Greta Garbo descended on Hollywood, remains a leader of American realism.

After the end of World War II, another group of American artists emulated their 19th century forebears and trooped abroad for study and refreshment in Europe. Some artists were war correspondents during the conflict, rendering the ravaged countryside for purely documentary reasons. Ogden M. Pleissner (1905-) worked for *Life Magazine*, traveling to Europe a week after hostilities ended to paint the great battlegrounds. His painting, *The Arno*, finished in 1949, was based on sketches made in Florence, Italy. The nearly dry Arno River, a topographical feature of Florence, vies with another landmark in the painting. The domed 17th century building, The Church of



GEORGE WESLEY BELLOWS (1882-1925). *The Bridge, Blackwell's Island*. Oil on canvas. 33½ x 44 inches. Signed lower right: Geo. Bellows. Gift of Edward Drummond Libbey, 1912.

San Frediano in Cestello, stands on the south side of the river. Of this painting, Pleissner has said: "The Arno sketches, I regret to say (as it would make a more exciting story) were not made under combat conditions, but the stark simplicity of the architecture, the beautiful tones of ochre, sienna, and the umbers all bathed in warm sunlight were all new to me. Also the church, San Frediano in Cestello, seemed something special to me and I guess I have done six or seven paintings where it is an important part of the composition."

Pleissner's realism selects elements in the actual world and wraps them in a framework of his own invention. Pleissner's landscapes and choice of subject often span the ocean, illustrating contemporary American interest in the European scene, an interest that has occupied American painters for 200 years.

Millard F. Rogers, Jr.



OGDEN MINTON PLEISSNER (1905-). *The Arno*. Oil on canvas. 24 x 40 inches. Signed lower right: Pleissner. Museum Purchase, 1951.



GEORGE INNESS (1825-1894). *The Olives*. Oil on canvas. 20 x 30 inches. Signed lower right: Inness, February 1873. Gift of J. D. Robinson, 1930.

IDYLLIC LANDSCAPES

"... What we painters have to learn is to keep the stop closed in the presence of Nature, to see and not to think we see; — when we do this our eyes are lighted from within, and the face of Nature is transformed, and we teach the world to see reality in a new light. Such is the mission of Art."

These are the words of George Inness (1825-1894), painter of *The Olives*. His statement captures qualities sought in nature by a segment of American painters, such as the group discussed here. Inness was younger than the leading Hudson River School artists who first discovered poetry and drama in the American wilderness. Like other remarkable "untrained professional" landscape painters of 19th century America, Inness was largely self-taught, a fact in which he took great pride.

He was born in New York and grew up in Newark, New Jersey, near the Passaic and Hackensack meadows. As a boy the artist was apprenticed to a

map-maker which accounts in part for his early, rather meticulous topographical renditions of landscapes. For just a month, at the age of nineteen, Inness was sent to study in New York with Régis Gignoux, a pupil of the French artist Delaroche and painter of carefully constructed winter landscapes.

It was Inness' early desire to fuse the qualities he saw in two prominent American landscapists of the Hudson River School, Thomas Cole and Asher Durand. He absorbed the spirit of Cole's exuberant visions of American scenery, full of theatrical contrasts of dark and light, but softened it. From Durand's intimate, literal landscapes he learned precision, but developed a freer, painterly technique. The result was something wholly original and personal. Inness was less concerned with outlines and more with the effect of light in nature. His first mature statements show a broad, loose handling of the pigment and all-enveloping light.

Italy was a goal for many American Romantic artists between 1830 and 1860. Inness journeyed there first in 1847. He made subsequent trips to Europe in 1850-1851, 1859, and 1871-1875. Few American painters were so directly in touch with European Old Masters and with the major European movements of the 19th century. Paintings became Inness' teachers. In Paris he saw the color of Delacroix and admired the new tonal landscapes of Corot and the Barbizon School. The 17th century classical landscape artists gave him a strong sense of composition, and according to the artist's son, the English landscape painter John Constable, was his great love.

Remarkably enough, in spite of Inness' direct contact with many other styles, he remained apart from them, maturing slowly in his own manner. Toledo's modest, lyric view of a field with an olive grove was painted in 1873, when the artist, his wife and six children made a final excursion to Italy and southern France. This period marks a turning point in Inness' style. Like the Barbizon painters, Inness created smaller paintings of restricted views. This canvas was given by the artist to Harrison E. and Edward D. Maynard of Boston.

The persistent tranquility of his vision is in contrast to his manner of working; often Inness was at his easel as long as fifteen hours, in a frenzy of excitement, covering layers of pigment as new ideas came to him. He generally preferred the intimate fragment to the spacious panoramas of other American painters. Without the Romantic props of violent storms, sentimental subject matter, or antique rains, Inness' paintings evoke a spirit of muted wonder and affirm his statement that "knowledge must bow to spirit."

The art of Albert Pinkham Ryder (1847-1917) is more intensely private. He was born in the whaling port of New Bedford, Massachusetts, moving with his family to New York at the age of twenty-three, where he spent the rest of his life. Throughout his career the sea of his background was a constant theme, sometimes majestic and peaceful, sometimes lonely and terrible.

The young artist studied informally in New York with a Romantic portrait painter and engraver, William E. Marshall, and in 1871 he was admitted to the National Academy of Design where he learned little from plaster

casts. Like Inness, he was essentially self-taught. His images were drawn literally, like William Blake's, from the world of his own dreams.

The Spirit of Dawn, a tiny, vaporous landscape in the Toledo Museum of Art is an early work, painted about 1875-1880. Ryder rarely signed his works and never dated them, thus the exact chronology of his paintings is impossible to determine. His first paintings are small, light, idyllic and relatively naturalistic. Even these, however, are not objective studies, but "memory pictures" of inner visions, often combining cherished fragments of the quiet pastures of New Bedford with apparitions from a spirit world. In Toledo's painting, a ghostly, semi-allegorical figure appears dimly in front of the tree on the left.

ALBERT PINKHAM RYDER (1847-1917). *The Spirit of Dawn*. Oil on canvas. 14 x 18 inches. Gift of Florence Scott Libbey, 1923.





RALPH ALBERT BLAKELOCK (1847-1919). Brook by Moonlight. Oil on canvas. 72 x 48 inches. Signed lower left: Ralph Albert Blakelock. Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Edward Drummond Libbey, 1916.

Ryder developed early and independently a technique of glazing, using sensuous, rich layers of impastos in a limited range of warm, soft, enamel-like tones which make his paintings, as he put it, seem "bathed in an atmosphere of golden luminosity." In his greatest period of creativity, he used darker tones. The majority of Ryder's works are twilight or night scenes, serene and melancholy, in which there is a sense of harmony for the whole and little concentration on outlines. Often the painter included haunted-looking characters from Shakespeare or Wagnerian operas, but these figures are always subordinate to the landscape which is chiefly expressive of emotion. His art thus stands in total contrast to his contemporaries: the Impressionists who sought sunlit colors out-of-doors and the artists around John Singer Sargent whose aim was bright naturalism.

Most of Ryder's imagery came to him during solitary midnight walks in New York's Central Park. In his notoriously cluttered studio on Fifth Ave-

(Right) ARTHUR B. DAVIES (1862-1928). Redwood Grove. Oil on canvas. 26 x 40 inches. Anonymous Gift, 1938.

nue, he lived in a world apart from the city, oblivious even to the ordinary comforts of living. Unlike Inness, he found little inspiration in the museums of Europe during his brief visits there; he was entranced only by the glittering ocean at night during the voyage. Of the foreign galleries he said: "We all like our own songs best."

A painter of ethereal, peaceful forests in moonlight, Ralph Albert Blakelock (1847-1919) was linked with Ryder, often unfavorably, in his own time. One critic wrote of "Mr. Ryder and his pupil Blakelock." Although the styles of the two artists are individual and there is no evidence of a personal relationship, Blakelock's aim in painting was close to Ryder's. Blakelock, who never went abroad and was totally self-taught, was also a subjective painter of mood rather than of observation. Like Ryder, he used strong impasto in mellow, dark color schemes with great feeling for pattern and tonal unity, but usually worked on larger canvases. Toledo Museum's *Brook by Moonlight*, showing typical black foliage silouetted like lace against a magic sky, is the most famous of his works.

There is a bitter contrast between the peace of Blakelock's visions and the unhappy struggle of the artist who was barely able to sell his works. Toledo's large canvas, painted about 1891, was taken by the painter in that year to the collector Catholina Lambert who was willing to pay only half the price the artist asked. This and other rebuffs caused a mental breakdown, and the artist in 1899 was committed to an asylum where he spent nearly the rest of his life. Ironically, at this time, his works began to fetch high prices. The National Academy of Design, which had ignored him, elected him an Associate. Innumerable forgeries of his paintings were made. When Edward Drummond Libbey bought *Brook by Moonlight* for the Toledo Museum of Art in 1916 (for the second highest price paid at auction for any American painting at that time), Blakelock himself was tragically unaware of this latent recognition.



The youngest of the visionary painters discussed here is Arthur B. Davies (1862-1928), who was born in Utica, New York, and spent part of his youth in Chicago where he studied with Charles Corwin at the Art Institute. In 1887, Davies went to New York for study. The Scottish art dealer, William MacBeth, who managed the first New York gallery devoted to contemporary American art, became interested in his work and gave him a studio over his shop. The Macbeth Gallery was the scene of the revolutionary showing in 1908 of works by *The Eight* — five bold realists (who were dubbed the *Ash Can School*), two Impressionists, and Davies (organizer of the exhibition, whose paintings were extremely personal).

Davies painted idyllic, mystical visions of unicorns and maidens in moonlight and, frequently, frieze-like designs of nude figures in wooded Arcadias. Though a lover of solitude, the artist was a well-traveled man with a vast knowledge of history, and his painted reveries were inspired by poetry and images of the past. He was enamored with the ideal nudes of the Greeks which his figures suggest, and even evolved his own theories concerning the art of the Greeks. His works show subtle simplification, cool and restricted colors, and a concentration on rhythmic patterns of line and color. Ever-present in Davies' paintings is a joyous, primitive idea of the unity of man and nature. *Redwood Grove* was painted about 1905, when Davies took a trip to California that inspired new natural imagery. The figures, engaged in some mysterious ritual before the mountains and giant redwood trees, are part of Davies' private mythology. Davies became interested in new movements in Europe, especially Cubism. His own experiments in this direction about 1914 resulted in broken surface decorations imposed upon his figures.

One of the artist's greatest contributions to American art was his supervision of the famous Armory Show of 1913. This exhibition, held in a regimental armory in New York, was originally conceived by the Society of American Artists as a show for new American artists. Davies accepted the presidency of this group, and, under his direction, the Armory Show became an ambitious survey of modern art, introducing Americans to young native artists as well as to the major post-Impressionists of Europe. As the organizer of the show, as a collector whose tastes were extremely broad, and in his own art, Davies asserted the supremacy of the individual.

Carole A. Taynton



*JOHN FREDERICK KENSETT (1816 - 1872).
Storm, Western Colorado. Oil on canvas. 18 $\frac{1}{8}$ x
28 $\frac{1}{8}$ inches. Gift of Florence Scott Libbey, 1945.*

NATURE AND HER MOODS

The moods of nature have inspired artists always. The changes of season and the changes from day to day or hour to hour have challenged the painter. American artists of the last century have approached nature with a fascinating variety of techniques.

John Frederick Kensett (1816-1872) began his career as an engraver. When he was twenty-four he left America for study in Europe, and he remained there for seven years. During this time he met artists, studied in the great museums, and began the transition from engraver to painter. Kensett was a gentle person with an outgoing personality. He responded to nature and felt a moral obligation to capture on canvas his feelings. In many respects his paintings reflect the similar concerns of William Cullen Bryant, Henry Thoreau, and William Wordsworth.

Kensett traveled a great deal and had many favorite spots, such as the Catskills and Adirondacks of New York, the White Mountains of New Hampshire and the Green Mountains of Vermont. Because of his association with men of like interests he was later mentioned as one of the leaders of the Hudson River School of painting. Actually, these men were all independent artists whose only real connection came through summer painting sessions and professional associations. One such excursion was made during the summer of 1870 with Sanford R. Gifford and Worthington Whittredge to sketch and paint in the Territory of Colorado. There were still only thirty-seven states in the Union, and Colorado was not to be admitted for another six years. On May 10, 1869, transportation to the West had become more convenient with the final connection of the Union Pacific and the Central Pacific at Promontory Point in Utah. This was America's first transcontinental railroad. Even so, a trip to the West was still an adventure into unsettled wilderness. Kensett most likely painted *Storm, Western Colorado* during this visit. He was not overpowered by the grandeur of the West as were other artists. He responded to the sense of space, the vast expanse of sky, and the ruggedness of nature.

His rapid brush strokes are fluid and thin, giving a looseness and sketchy quality which seem in keeping with this wilderness. The storm is gathering. A hush has fallen over the lake. The mountains are muted in a warm brown. Although the canvas is small in size, Kensett has captured all the majesty of the Colorado Rockies, a geography quite different from the Hudson River Valley.

John Kensett was not only a successful and popular artist in terms of his paintings but he was actively involved with mid-19th century artists' groups. He was one of the founders, and for five years president of the Artists' Fund Society; he was an elected member of the National Academy of Design, and he served on many of its committees. He was one of the founders of the Metropolitan Museum of Art and served as a trustee and recording secretary. He was also appointed by President James Buchanan to the Art Commission for the decoration of the United States Capitol Extension. When he died at the age of fifty-six in 1872, he was well established as one of America's leading landscape painters. The World's Columbian Exposition at Chicago in 1893 honored Kensett's memory by including his work in the American display. He was now considered a pioneer in American painting of landscapes. Also on display at the Exposition was *Sunlight on the Coast* by Winslow Homer.

Winslow Homer (1863-1910) painted *Sunlight on the Coast* in 1890 when he was fifty-four. It was his first seascape. He had painted the sea before but always as a backdrop to some human drama. Now he began to capture the essential forces of nature which he felt at Prout's Neck, Maine. He had settled there seven years earlier and he was to die there twenty years later. Homer spent many hours contemplating the sea. He was fascinated by the eternal struggle between water and rocks. His early apprenticeship as a lithographer in his home town, Boston, and his successful illustrations for *Harp-*



WINSLOW HOMER (1836-1910). *Sunlight on the Coast*. Oil on canvas. 30 $\frac{1}{8}$ x 48 inches. Signed lower left: Winslow Homer 1890. Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Edward Drummond Libbey, 1912.

er's *Weekly* had given him a keen eye. His drawings of the Civil War were graphically real. He observed minor details with intense concentration. Yet, to Homer, the sea was his real challenge. He wanted to portray all of the shifting and subtle changes he observed, the peculiarities of light and the nuances of color in the tides.

In *Sunlight on the Coast* the rocky shore is pounded by a massive wave which seems to strike again and again. Its swirling strength is heightened by the rich colors, greens and blues, which run from the deepest depths of the ocean to the light and mist which rides the cold sunlit crest of the wave. Against this swelling and heaving force a gray bank of fog slowly creeps toward the shore quietly concealing the horizon. The contrast emphasizes the dramatic quality of the ocean. A slight reference is made to Homer's earlier journalistic training in the steamship on the horizon which seems to be in no danger, and yet there is doubt. The way in which Homer has composed his painting and his appli-

cation of paint reflect a high degree of skill developed through his own talents, as his formal art training was very limited. Paint is applied forcefully with thick, twisting movements of the brush and the palette knife. The rising foam and mist is created by textured use of the palette knife.

Ernest Lawson (1873-1939) approached nature in an entirely different spirit. His painting, *Early Spring, Harlem River*, brings water, sky, and trees into close relationship to man's creations: bridges, houses, fences. Everything blurs together in a haze. The textured brush strokes are not calculated but seem to have an over-all similarity and consistency.

Lawson was born in San Francisco, California. He developed his skill in drawing as an engineering draftsman in Mexico City. After a brief period in Europe he settled in New York studying at the Art Student's League with John Twachtman. He taught at the Broadmoor Art Academy in Colorado Springs and the Kansas City Art Institute. His attitude toward Colorado landscape illustrates some of the differences between his views of nature and those of John Kensett. He once said of Colorado: "I couldn't feel the place, that stuff, it was too bleak . . . forbidding." Although Lawson exhibited with other artists such as John Sloan and George Luks in a group called the *Eight Independent Painters*, or just *The Eight*, he does not possess the same rebellious, realistic vision. His work was influenced by the French Impressionists, Pissarro, Sisley and Monet. Yet Lawson's view of the Harlem River, painted about 1920-1930, has solidity and force even though he paints the light and atmosphere of early spring. His colors are all lightened and fresh but the buildings along the river have lost their volume and structure. The artists that exhibited with Lawson might have been more interested in the people who lived in the ramshackled houses or worked on the river, but Lawson sees the city in a peaceful glow of warm sunlight. Nature is here portrayed in a gentle moment, yet it is not an idyllic scene. It is a human landscape. It reflects Lawson's simple love for a part of New York he knew intimately.

The jewel-like impressions in *Early Spring, Harlem River* contrast strongly with the first cold autumn days in *The Hunter*. This latter painting first appeared as the October 16, 1943, cover on the *Saturday Evening Post*. It portrays a giant buttonwood tree well-known to Andrew Newell Wyeth (1917-). The tree dominates Lafayette's Headquarters at Chadds Ford, Pennsylvania. Wyeth was born in Chadds Ford in 1917, and he has lived there continually, except for his summer trips to Maine. The rolling countryside in the Brandywine River Valley possesses a certain sense of the past which has always been important to Wyeth.

Wyeth himself developed an understanding of art and craftsmanship at an early age. His father was Newell Convers Wyeth who is remembered for his illustrations of Robin Hood and King Arthur and other romantic legends. At the age of fourteen, Wyeth started a rigorous apprenticeship with his father, whose work was strongly influenced by the meticulous style of the English Pre-



ERNEST LAWSON (1873-1939). *Early Spring, Harlem River*. Oil on canvas. 25 x 30 inches. Signed lower right: E. Lawson. Museum Purchase, 1952.

Raphaelites. When he was twenty, Andrew Wyeth had his first one-man show, and he was an immediate success.

The Hunter was painted by Wyeth when he was twenty-six. Although he possesses a talent with watercolors similar to the spontaneous style of Winslow Homer, whom he greatly admires, he has consistently painted with egg tempera on a gesso surface. The egg tempera suits his love for draftsmanlike detail. It allows him to explore the textures of nature with clarity. The painting is the result of painstaking study, and many sketches were made. The final



ANDREW NEWELL WYETH (1917-). *The Hunter*. Tempera on panel. 33 x 34 inches. Signed lower right: Andrew Wyeth. Gift of Elizabeth C. Mau, 1946.

painting was carefully composed and required many hours to complete. Egg tempera can not be applied effectively in bold, forceful strokes as oil paints are. Therefore, the final image results from a precise application of fine strokes. This deliberate method of working gives *The Hunter* an intense sense of reality. It seems almost more real than images captured by the human eye. Every detail of nature is in sharp focus. The unusual aerial or bird's-eye view created by looking down the buttonwood tree and off into space adds to the dramatic sense of removal. It makes this tree seem even more monumental. It also creates a loneliness and isolates the hunter, who almost disappears in the warm fall colors. Only his hat rescues him.

Wyeth's strong sense of composition and his highly precise method of painting stand in sharp contrast to John Kensett's rapid sketch of an approaching storm in Colorado. These two paintings illustrate that the artist's method of working and style of painting do not necessarily limit his creative expression. Both men possessed a similar love for nature. One chose the quiet of a fall landscape, the other chose the quiet before an impending storm. Both possess subtle similarities and subtle differences. Perhaps this is the charm of a museum where both can be seen.

Charles F. Gunther

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